

FABLES

No. 53

VERTIGO

WILLINGHAM
BUCKINGHAM
LEIALOHA
PEPOY

Plus
a backup
story
by
JOSHUA MIDDLETON

Nov 06
2.99 can 4.00
SUGGESTED FOR
MATURE READERS
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THE FOUR PLAGUES

Part
Two of
SONS OF
EMPIRE



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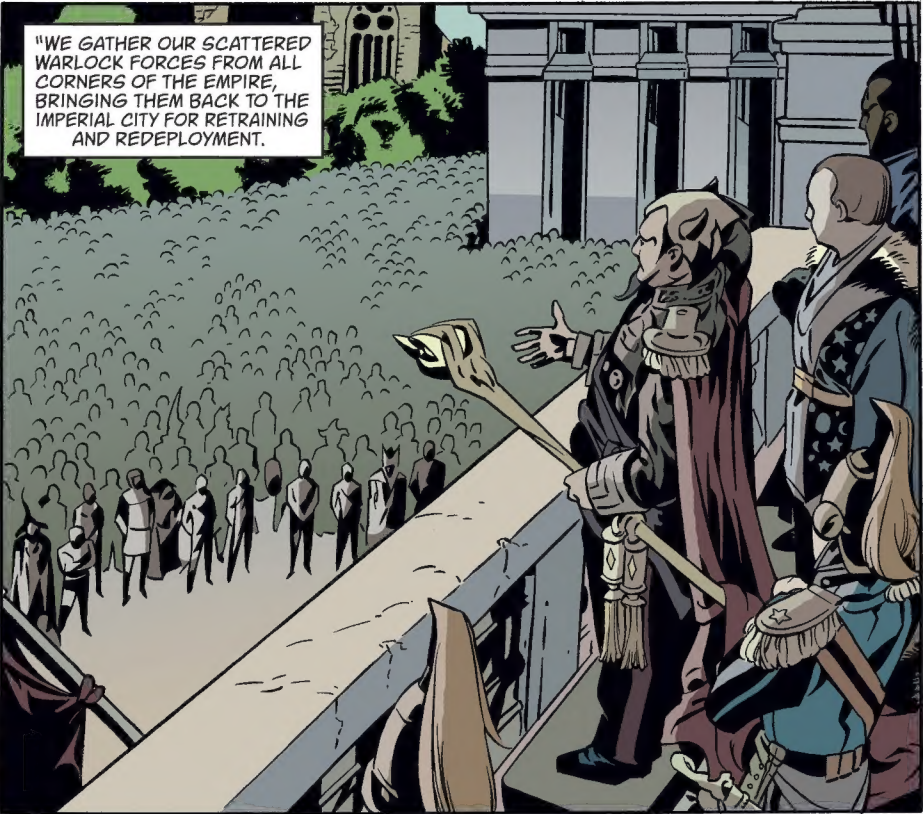
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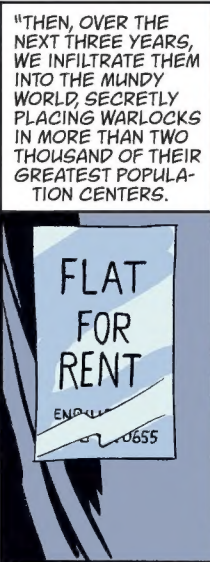
"THIS IS HOW
THE WORLD
ENDS."



"WE GATHER OUR SCATTERED WARLOCK FORCES FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE EMPIRE, BRINGING THEM BACK TO THE IMPERIAL CITY FOR RETRAINING AND REDEPLOYMENT."



"THEN, OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS, WE INFILTRATE THEM INTO THE MUNDY WORLD, SECRETLY PLACING WARLOCKS IN MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND OF THEIR GREATEST POPULATION CENTERS."



"WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE FLAT, MR....?"

"TOM HARROW. NO THANKS. IT'S FINE. I'LL TAKE IT."



"ON A SELECTED DAY IN 2009, THEY GO INTO ACTION, SIMULTANEOUSLY RELEASING THE SIX MOST VIRULENT DISEASES IN OUR ARSENAL."

"YOU'RE GOING TO DIE TODAY, MRS. FALSINGHAM."

"WHAT?"



"BOTULISM, BLACK PLAGUE, SMALLPOX, AND TULAREMIA THE MUNDYS HAVE PAST EXPERIENCE WITH.

"TO THOSE WE'LL ADD RED CITY PLAGUE AND THE SKOLD BROWNPOX, WHICH THEY'VE NEVER ENCOUNTERED BEFORE.

BREATH DEEP, EVERYONE.

"BIOLOGICAL WARFARE AT ITS FINEST.

"AFTER THE INITIAL RELEASE OUR WARLOCKS WILL TRAVEL TO NEARBY TOWNS, CONTINUING TO SOW DEATH FOR SIX MORE DAYS BEFORE EXFILTRATION HOME.

YOU CAN'T PERCEIVE ME NOW, BUT I'M KILLING ALL OF YOU.

"THIS IS THE FIRST GREAT PLAGUE OF OUR FOUR-STAGE WAR.

"PESTILENCE.



"FOR SIX MONTHS WE'LL LET THE DISEASES FERMENT..."

"...RAVAGING THEIR CITIES AND SPREADING OUT ACROSS THEIR COUNTRIES..."

"...WHILE WE PLACE OUR AGENTS FOR THE NEXT STAGE."



B

B

"THE
PLAGUE
OF
FIRE."



"AT THE COST OF STALLING
THE ARABIAN CAMPAIGN FOR
A FEW YEARS, WE'LL PULL ALL
SEVEN DRAGON WINGS OUT
OF SERVICE AND SEND THEM
TO THE MUNDY WORLD."

"AN AVERAGE OF THIRTY
MAJOR CITIES CAN BE
BURNED EACH DAY, FOR
ABOUT TWELVE DAYS,
BEFORE MUNDY AIRCRAFT
FINALLY CHASE THEM OUT
OF THE SKIES."

"NEARLY TWO THIRDS
OF OUR DRAGONS
SHOULD SURVIVE TO
RETURN TO US. AN
ACCEPTABLE PRICE."



"FIRE IMPS WILL
BURN ANOTHER TEN
THOUSAND CITIES."



"THEY'LL ALL BE SPELL-
RELEASED ON THE
SAME DAY, FROM CON-
TAINMENT BOTTLES
SECRETLY PLACED BY
OUR WARLOCKS DURING
THE PESTILENCE PHASE
OF THE WAR."



"THEY'RE UNREASONING
THINGS OF PURE RAGE
AND FURY..."



"...LIVING ONLY TO
BURN EVERYTHING
IN THEIR PATH, ONLY
DYING WHEN THE
FUEL RUNS OUT."

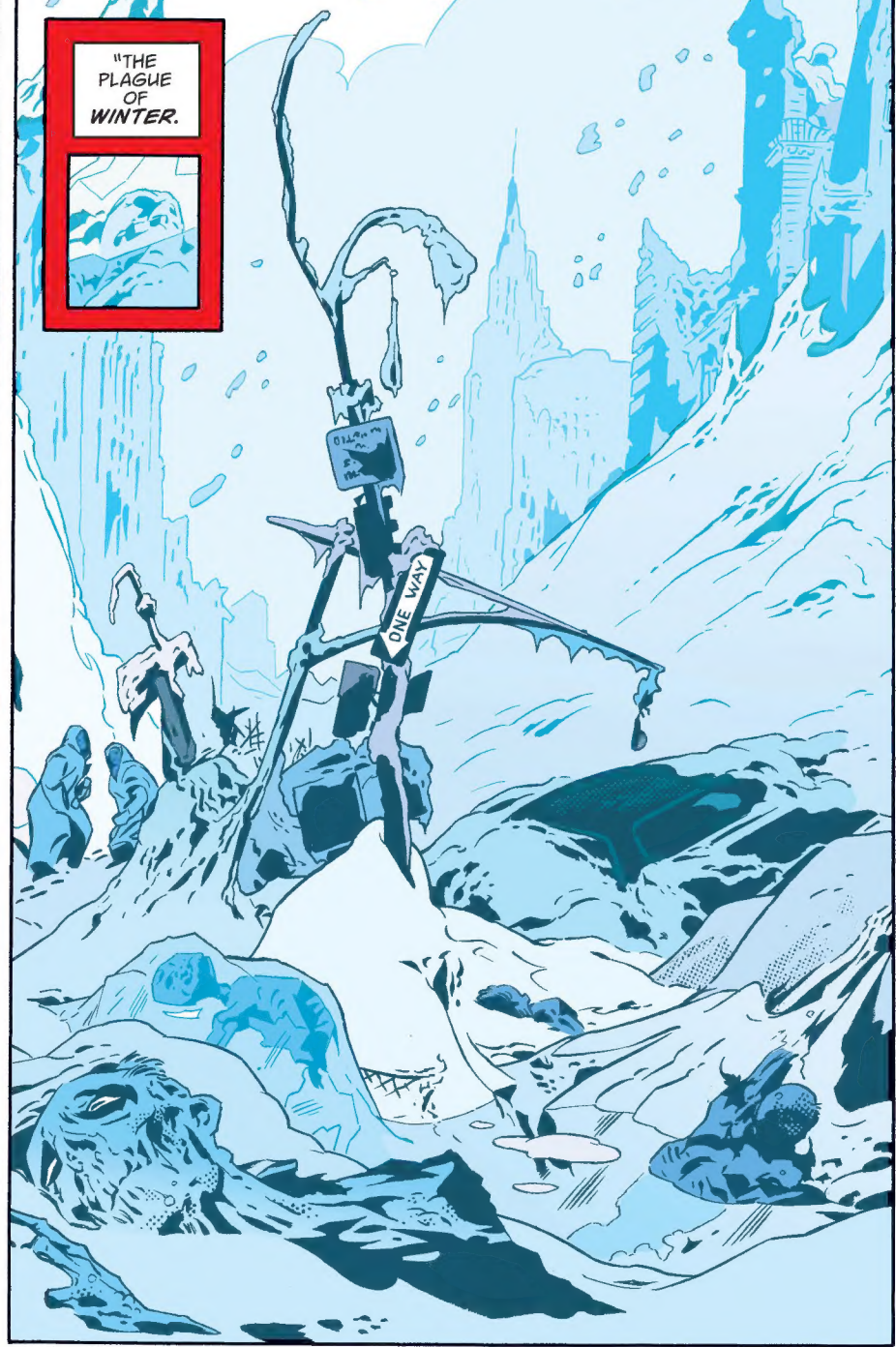


"THE MUNDYS WON'T KNOW THE SIMPLE
SPELLS TO KILL THEM THAT ANY FIRST-
YEAR SORCERER'S APPRENTICE LEARNS."

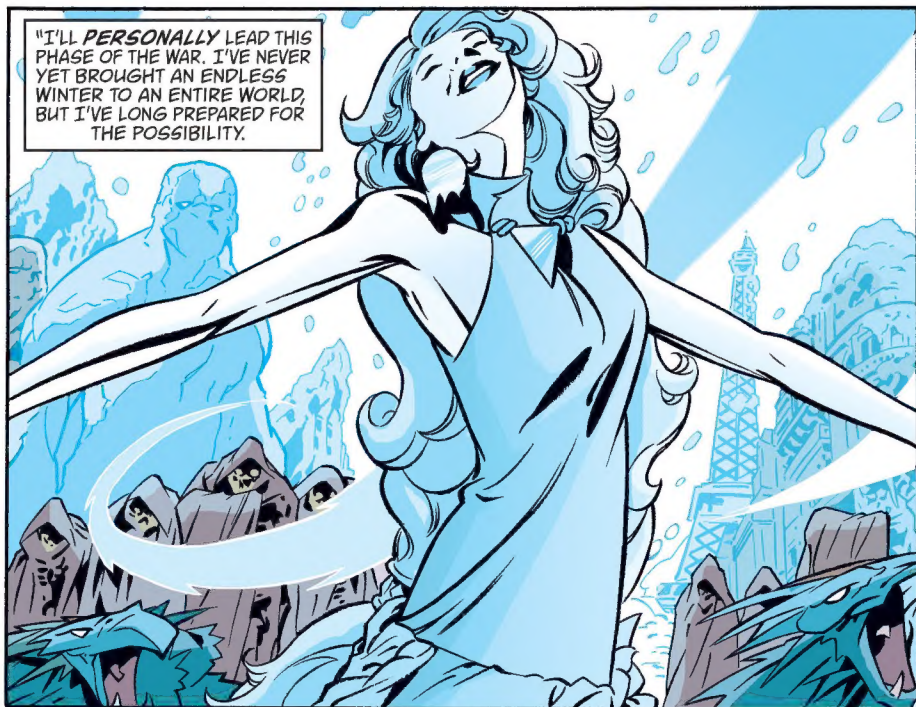


"THE NEXT PLAGUE WILL BEGIN ALMOST ON THE HEELS OF THE PLAGUE OF FIRE, SO THAT WE DON'T ALLOW THE SURVIVORS ANY TIME TO RECOVER AND REBUILD."

"THE PLAGUE OF WINTER."



"I'LL *PERSONALLY* LEAD THIS PHASE OF THE WAR. I'VE NEVER YET BROUGHT AN ENDLESS WINTER TO AN ENTIRE WORLD, BUT I'VE LONG PREPARED FOR THE POSSIBILITY."



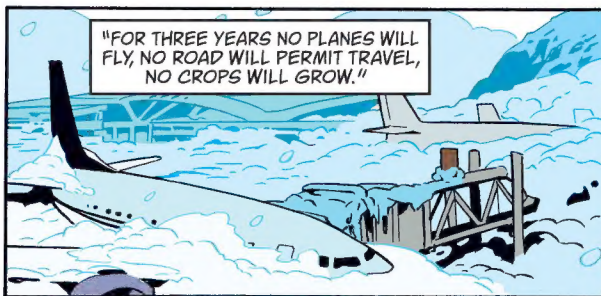
"MY ICE GIANTS, BOREAL SPIRITS, AND FROSTLINGS WILL SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, CARRYING MY POWER WITH THEM."



"THREE YEARS WITHOUT LETUP SHOULD BE ENOUGH--A TRUE FIMBUL WINTER OF LEGEND."



"FOR THREE YEARS NO PLANES WILL FLY, NO ROAD WILL PERMIT TRAVEL, NO CROPS WILL GROW."



"EVERY MODERN POWER-GENERATION SYSTEM WILL FREEZE AND DIE.



"THE DELICATE INFRASTRUCTURES NEEDED TO SUSTAIN A MODERN WORLD WILL COLLAPSE IN FULL.



"THOSE WHO SURVIVED THE PESTILENCE AND THE BURNING CITIES BY FLEEING INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE WILL FIND NOTHING THERE TO SUSTAIN THEM.



"WHICH LEADS INTO THE FOURTH AND FINAL PLAGUE OF THE WAR."



B

"THE
PLAGUE
OF
FAMINE.



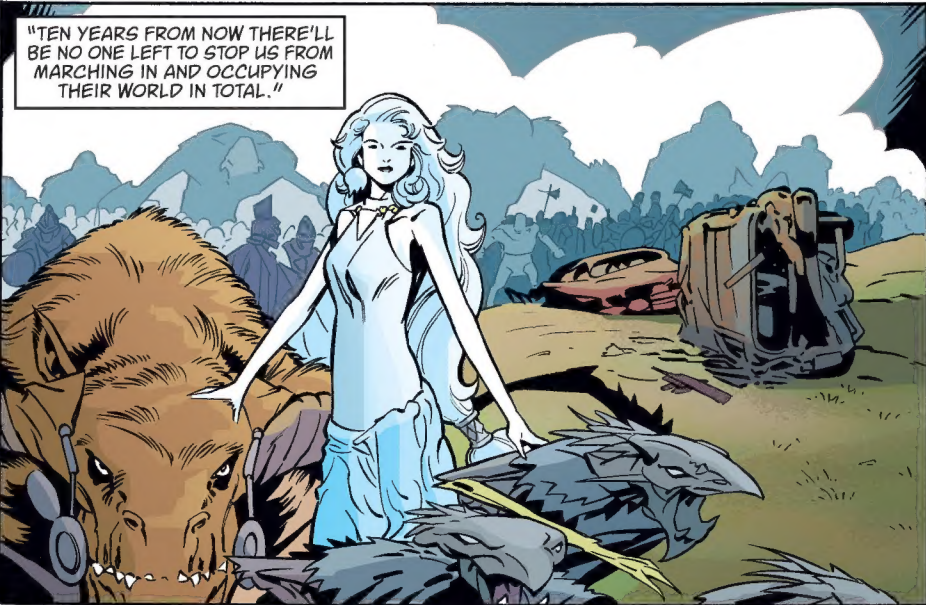
"THIS STAGE WILL PROCEED
AUTOMATICALLY FROM THE
OTHERS. AT THIS POINT WE
NEED DO NOTHING BUT STAND
BACK AND LET THE REMAIN-
ING MUNDYS EXPIRE.



"OR REGRESS INTO SUCH
BASE SAVAGERY THAT IT'S NO
DIFFERENT FROM EXTINCTION,
FOR OUR PURPOSES.



"TEN YEARS FROM NOW THERE'LL
BE NO ONE LEFT TO STOP US FROM
MARCHING IN AND OCCUPYING
THEIR WORLD IN TOTAL."



THE HOMELANDS.

WE'VE SO OFTEN SPOKEN OF DESIGNATING ONE WORLD FOR EXCLUSIVE USE AS A PRISON AND PUNISHMENT WORLD.



THE CONVENTION OF SELECT EMPIRE OFFICIALS TO DETERMINE THE FATE OF FABLETOWN CONTINUES.

WHY NOT THE MUNDY WORLD-- SINCE IT WILL BE TOO RAVAGED BY THEN TO BE USABLE AS MUCH ELSE?



THAT CONCLUDES MY PRESENTATION.



UHM...THANK YOU, LUMI, FOR THAT DETAILED AND COMPREHENSIVE AND UHM... **INTRIGUING** PROPOSAL.

SINCE OTHERS MAY WISH TO GATHER THEIR THOUGHTS BEFORE RESPONDING, I SUGGEST WE TAKE OUR LUNCH BREAK NOW.





MANHATTAN.

WHAT DO YOU *MEAN* HE'S A FROG AGAIN?

LOOK FOR YOURSELF!



WELL, YES, BEAUTY, I CAN *SEE* THERE'S A FROG HERE, BUT HOW DO WE KNOW IT'S FLYCATCHER?

BECAUSE I WATCHED IT HAPPEN!

ME TOO.



ONE SECOND FLY IS PACING BACK AND FORTH IN FRONT OF THE MAGIC MIRROR, PALE AND SWEATING BUCKETS...

...AND NEXT THING I KNOW, THERE'S A BIG POOF, AND THEN NOTHING BUT FROG!

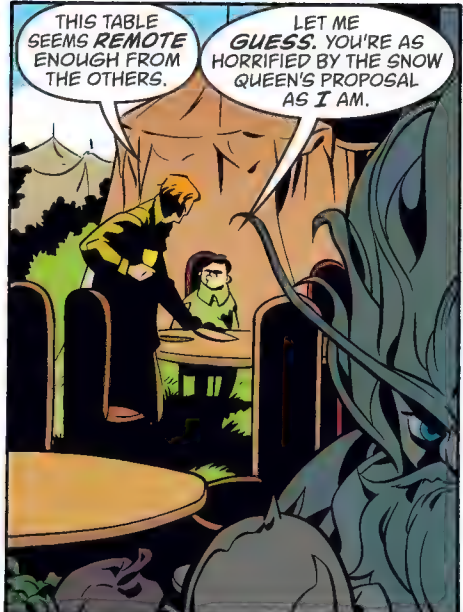
Rabbit?

CAN I HAVE HIM?



NO!





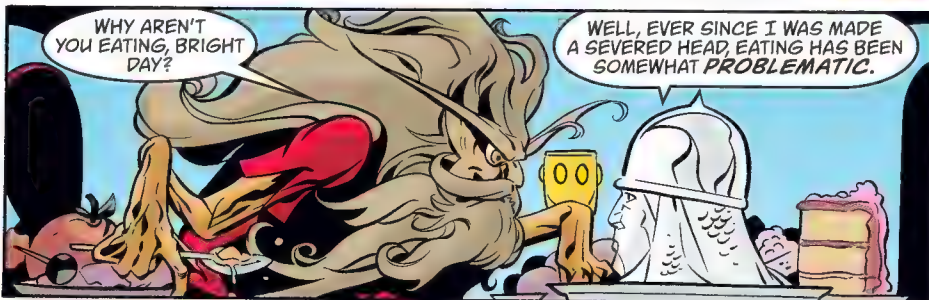


I HAVE TO CONFESS, I'M AS DELIGHTED BY THE SNOW QUEEN'S PROPOSAL AS YOU ARE.



OF COURSE WE NEED TO *IMPROVE* ON IT HERE AND THERE. SHE CAN'T BE ALLOWED TO DO THIS WITHOUT MY *DIRECT* INVOLVEMENT.

I'M IN COMMAND OF *NUMEROUS* DIVERSE EVIL SPIRITS THAT CAN BE OF HELP IN EVERY STAGE OF THE WAR.



WHY AREN'T YOU EATING, BRIGHT DAY?

WELL, EVER SINCE I WAS MADE A SEVERED HEAD, EATING HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT *PROBLEMATIC*.



OF COURSE. OF COURSE. MORE FOR THE *REST* OF US, THEN.

HOW DO YOU THINK IT'S GOING, LUMI?

JUDGING STRICTLY BY THE REACTIONS I PERCEIVED, WE'RE ABOUT EVENLY *SPLIT*.



PINOCCHIO AND RODNEY *HATE* THE PLAN, WHEREAS BRIGHT DAY AND THE NOME KING *LOVE* IT.

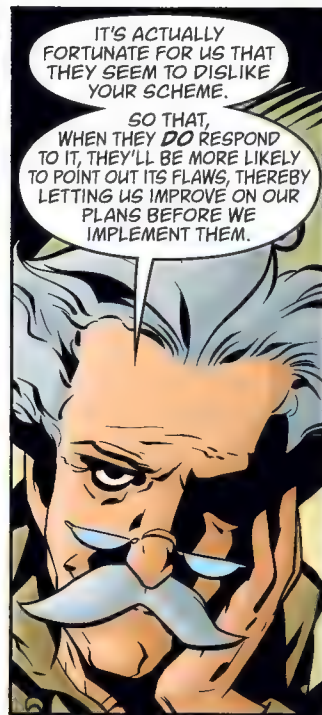
MIDDLECOCK'S OPINION DOESN'T MATTER, AND LORD HANSEL WASN'T IN ATTENDANCE TODAY. WHY *IS* THAT, HONORED GRANDFATHER?

I HAVE REASONS FOR NOT WANTING HIM TO KNOW THE SPECIFICS OF OUR WAR PLANS.



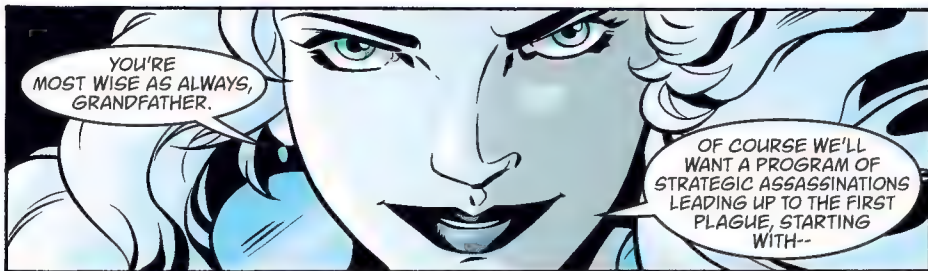
THEN YOU APPROVE MY PROPOSAL?

SO FAR, YES. WAR IS *INEVITABLE* AT SOME POINT. BUT RODNEY AND PINOCCHIO ARE OUR CURRENT BEST EXPERTS IN MATTERS REGARDING THE MUNDY WORLD.



IT'S ACTUALLY FORTUNATE FOR US THAT THEY SEEM TO DISLIKE YOUR SCHEME.

SO THAT, WHEN THEY *DO* RESPOND TO IT, THEY'LL BE MORE LIKELY TO POINT OUT ITS FLAWS, THEREBY LETTING US IMPROVE ON OUR PLANS BEFORE WE IMPLEMENT THEM.



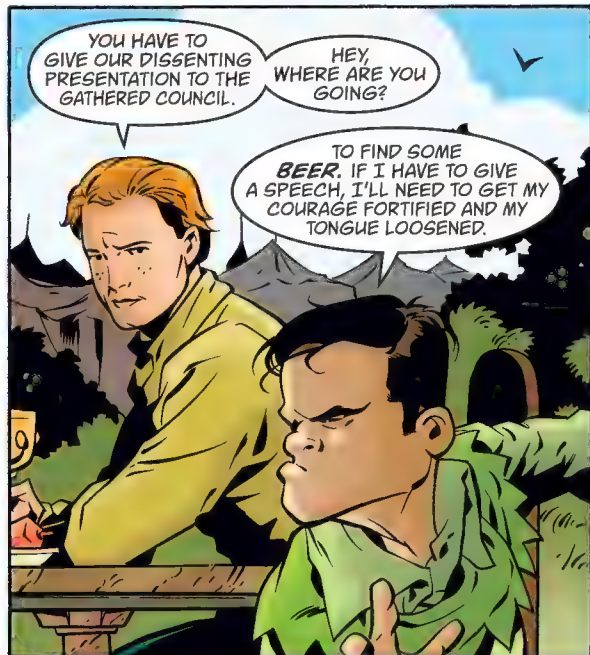
YOU'RE MOST WISE AS ALWAYS, GRANDFATHER.

OF COURSE WE'LL WANT A PROGRAM OF STRATEGIC ASSASSINATIONS LEADING UP TO THE FIRST PLAGUE, STARTING WITH--



ME? WHY ME?

BECAUSE YOU'RE THE FIRST-CARVED, OUR SACRED FATHER'S MOST *BELOVED* CREATION. HE'S MORE LIKELY TO BE WILLING TO HEAR BAD NEWS FROM *YOU* THAN FROM *ME*--OR ANYONE ELSE.



YOU HAVE TO GIVE OUR DISSIDENTING PRESENTATION TO THE GATHERED COUNCIL.

HEY, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

TO FIND SOME *BEER*. IF I HAVE TO GIVE A SPEECH, I'LL NEED TO GET MY COURAGE FORTIFIED AND MY TONGUE LOOSENED.

↑ THE FARM--FABLETOWN'S
UPSTATE ANNEX FOR
ANIMAL FABLES.



YOW!



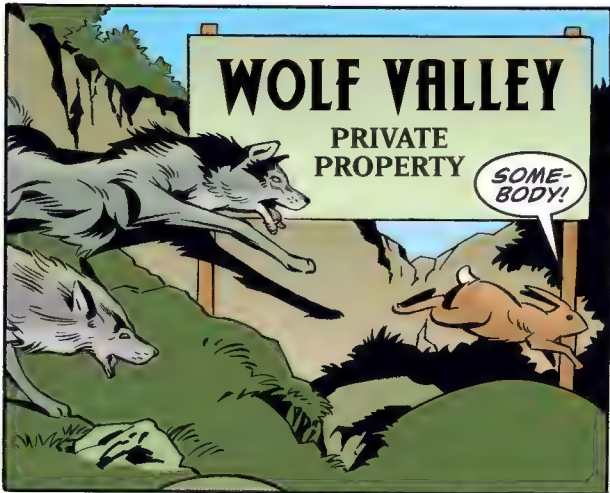
YIKES!

WE'VE
GOT YOU NOW,
PETER!



HELP!

WARNING
YOU ARE LEAVING
FARM TERRITORY



WOLF VALLEY
PRIVATE
PROPERTY

SOME-
BODY!



WHO CAN
SAVE YOU FROM
WOLVES IN WOLF
VALLEY?

HOW ABOUT
THE BIGGEST, BADDEST
WOLF OF ALL?

BIGBY!

HOLY
MAJOLIES!





WHAT ARE YOU TWO **DOING** HERE ON MY LAND?

WELL, IT IS WOLF VALLEY, AND WE **ARE** WOLVES.

NOT IN *MY* PACK.



YOU'RE BRER WOLF AND YOU'RE ISENGRIM, FROM KING NOBLE'S BUNCH, RIGHT?

Y-YES, SIR. WE WERE JUST HAVING SOME GOOD-NATURED **SPORT**, SIR.



IF ATTEMPTED **MURDER** COUNTS AS SPORTING.



GO HOME AND DON'T COME **BACK** HERE, OR I'LL GREASE MY CHIN WITH THE **BOTH** OF YOU.



YES, SIR!

RIGHT AWAY, SIR!



NOT SO FAST, MR. COTTONTAIL. I WANT A **WORD** WITH YOU BEFORE YOU GO.

I DIDN'T MEAN TO CROSS INTO WOLF VALLEY, BIGBY. I WAS JUST TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM THOSE TWO.



AND DOING A DAMN FINE **JOB** OF IT, FROM WHAT I SAW.

YOU AREN'T GOING TO **EAT** ME, ARE YOU, MR. WOLF?



DON'T WORRY. YOU WOULDN'T EVEN MAKE A SMALL **SNACK**. JUST SOMETHING TO GET CAUGHT BETWEEN MY TEETH.

NO, WHAT I WANT IS TO ASK A **FAVOR** OF YOU.



MY CUBS ARE GROWING FAST AND NEED TO PRACTICE THEIR HUNTING AND SUCH. HOW WOULD YOU LIKE A **JOB** DOING PRETTY MUCH WHAT YOU WERE JUST DOING NOW?

LETTING A **PACK** OF WOLVES CHASE AND **KILL** ME?



CHASING, YES. KILLING, NO. THEY'LL GET POINTS EVERY TIME THEY CORNER YOU, BUT I WON'T EVER LET THEM LAY SO MUCH AS A **CLAW** OR **FANG** ON YOU.

INTERESTED?



I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU EXCLUDED ME FROM TODAY'S MEETING, SIRE.



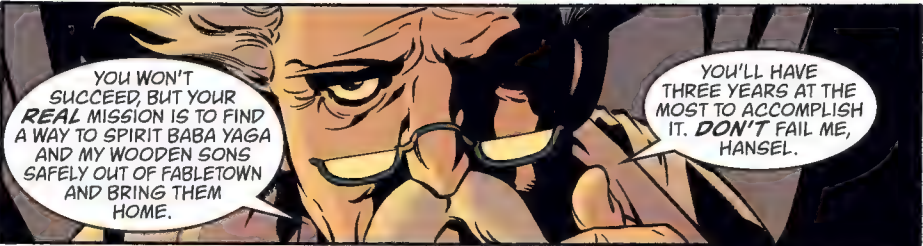
IT'S SIMPLE ENOUGH, YOUNG HANSEL. I CAN'T LET YOU KNOW WHAT WAS PLANNED TODAY, SO THAT YOU CAN NEVER REVEAL IT UNDER HARSH QUESTIONING-- OR WORSE.

SIR?



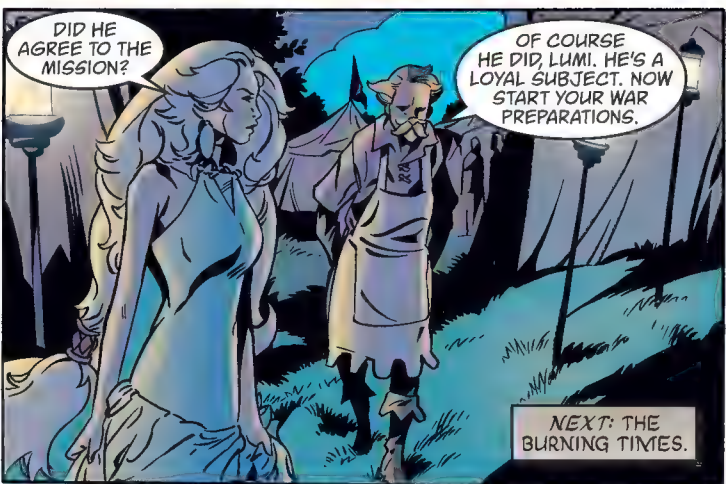
I'M GOING TO SEND YOU TO THE MUNDY WORLD AND FABLETOWN AS OUR OFFICIAL ENVOY. THEIR **MURDEROUS** WOLF INVITED US TO DO AS MUCH DURING HIS RECENT INCURSION HERE.

WHILE THERE YOU WILL CONDUCT YOURSELF IN ALL PROPRIETY AND ATTEMPT TO NEGOTIATE A LASTING PEACE TREATY WITH THE REBELS.



YOU WON'T SUCCEED, BUT YOUR **REAL** MISSION IS TO FIND A WAY TO SPIRIT BABA YAGA AND MY WOODEN SONS SAFELY OUT OF FABLETOWN AND BRING THEM HOME.

YOU'LL HAVE THREE YEARS AT THE MOST TO ACCOMPLISH IT. **DON'T** FAIL ME, HANSEL.



DID HE AGREE TO THE MISSION?

OF COURSE HE DID, LUMI. HE'S A LOYAL SUBJECT. NOW START YOUR WAR PREPARATIONS.

NEXT: THE BURNING TIMES.



PORKY PINE PIE

Bill Willingham
writer-creator

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editor

IN THE
HOMELANDS,
NOT ALL THAT
FAR FROM
THE BIG
CONFERENCE.

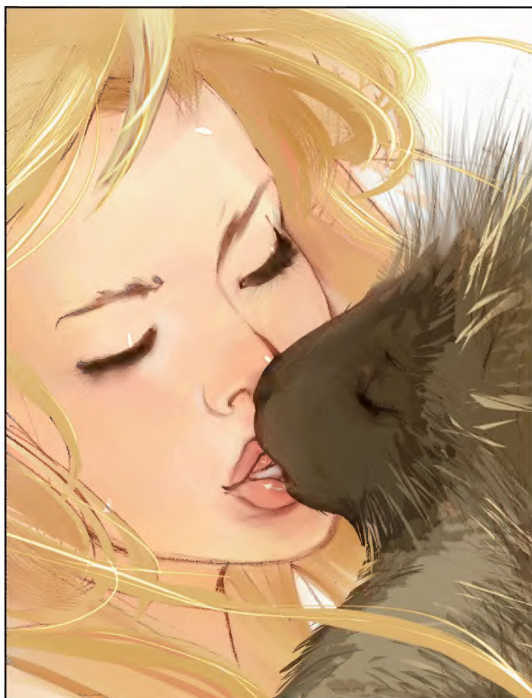
I DON'T
KNOW, MR. PORKY PINE.
THAT SOUNDS **AWFULLY**
UNLIKELY.

WHICH IS
EXACTLY THE NATURE
OF EVIL ENCHANTMENTS--
MAKING THE AWFUL AND
UNLIKELY **TRUE**.

I'M ACTUALLY A
HANDSOME **PRINCE**, WITH
LANDS AND RICHES AND ALL
THAT GOOD STUFF.

BUT A SCABBY OLD
CRONE, JEALOUS OF MY GOOD
LOOKS, ENSORCELLED ME TO REMAIN
IN THIS HORRIBLE FORM UNTIL THE
KISS OF THE MOST **LOVELY** HUMAN
GIRL IN THE REALM RESTORES
ME.

REALLY?





AND YOU NEVER TURNED INTO A PRINCE! YOU'RE JUST A **HORRIBLE** OLD BEAST!

IF I HADN'T SEEN IT FOR MYSELF, I'D NEVER HAVE BELIEVED IT.

I **TOLD** YOU I COULD CONVINCE A HUMAN GIRL TO KISS ME.

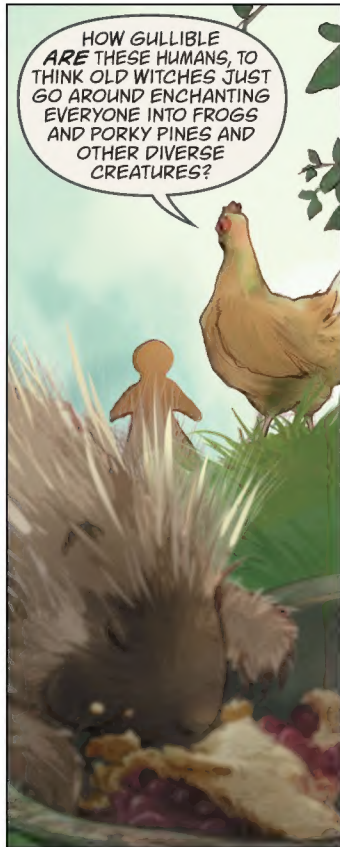
TWICE!



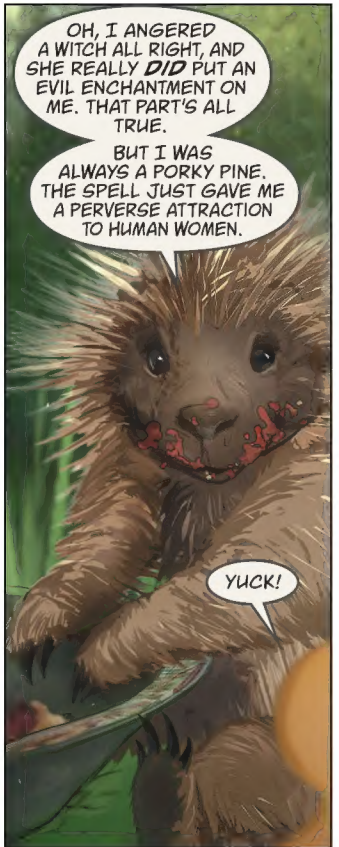
SO PAY UP, CHICKEN RIPPLE.

OKAY, YOU GET THE LAST SLICE OF STOLEN PIE.

WHEN ARE WE GOING TO HAVE A BET I CAN JOIN IN ON? I DON'T EAT PIE--OR ANYTHING ELSE.



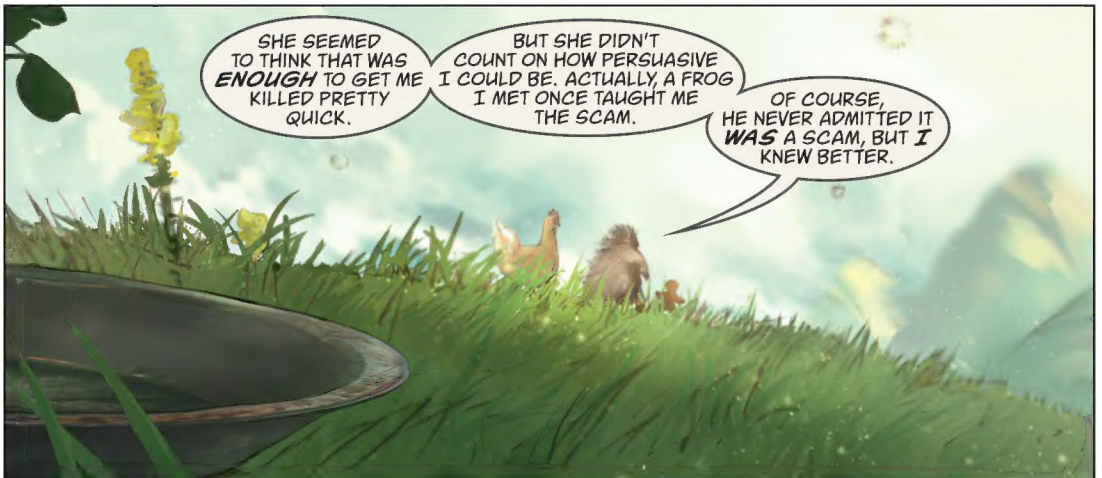
HOW GULLIBLE **ARE** THESE HUMANS, TO THINK OLD WITCHES JUST GO AROUND ENCHANTING EVERYONE INTO FROGS AND PORKY PINES AND OTHER DIVERSE CREATURES?



OH, I ANGERED A WITCH ALL RIGHT, AND SHE REALLY **DID** PUT AN EVIL ENCHANTMENT ON ME. THAT PART'S ALL TRUE.

BUT I WAS ALWAYS A PORKY PINE. THE SPELL JUST GAVE ME A PERVERSE ATTRACTION TO HUMAN WOMEN.

YUCK!



SHE SEEMED TO THINK THAT WAS **ENOUGH** TO GET ME KILLED PRETTY QUICK.

BUT SHE DIDN'T COUNT ON HOW PERSUASIVE I COULD BE. ACTUALLY, A FROG I MET ONCE TAUGHT ME THE SCAM.

OF COURSE, HE NEVER ADMITTED IT **WAS** A SCAM, BUT I KNEW BETTER.

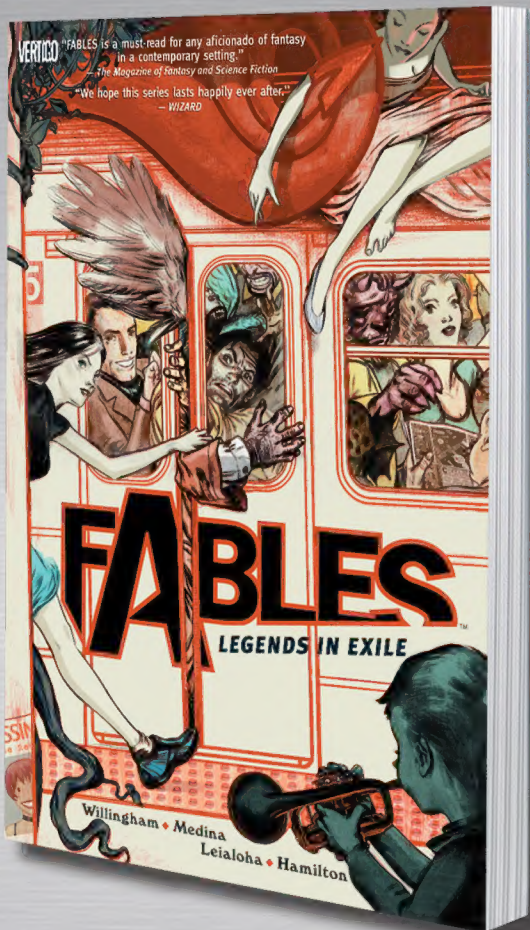
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BILL WILLINGHAM

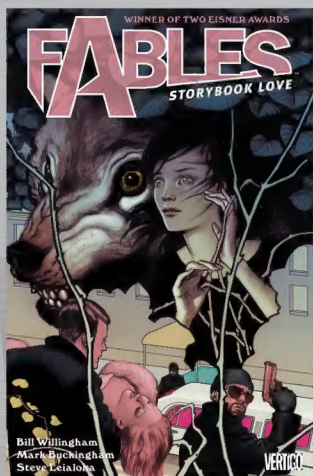
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- VOL. 4: MARCH OF THE WOODEN SOLDIERS
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- VOL. 6: HOMELANDS
- VOL. 7: ARABIAN NIGHTS (AND DAYS)
- VOL. 8: WOLVES
- VOL. 9: SONS OF EMPIRE
- VOL. 10: THE GOOD PRINCE
- VOL. 11: WAR AND PIECES
- VOL. 12: THE DARK AGES
- VOL. 13: THE GREAT FABLES CROSSOVER
- 1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



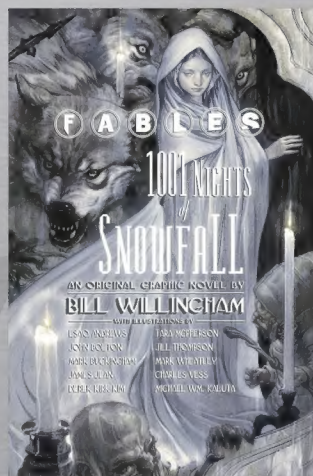
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STORYBOOK LOVE



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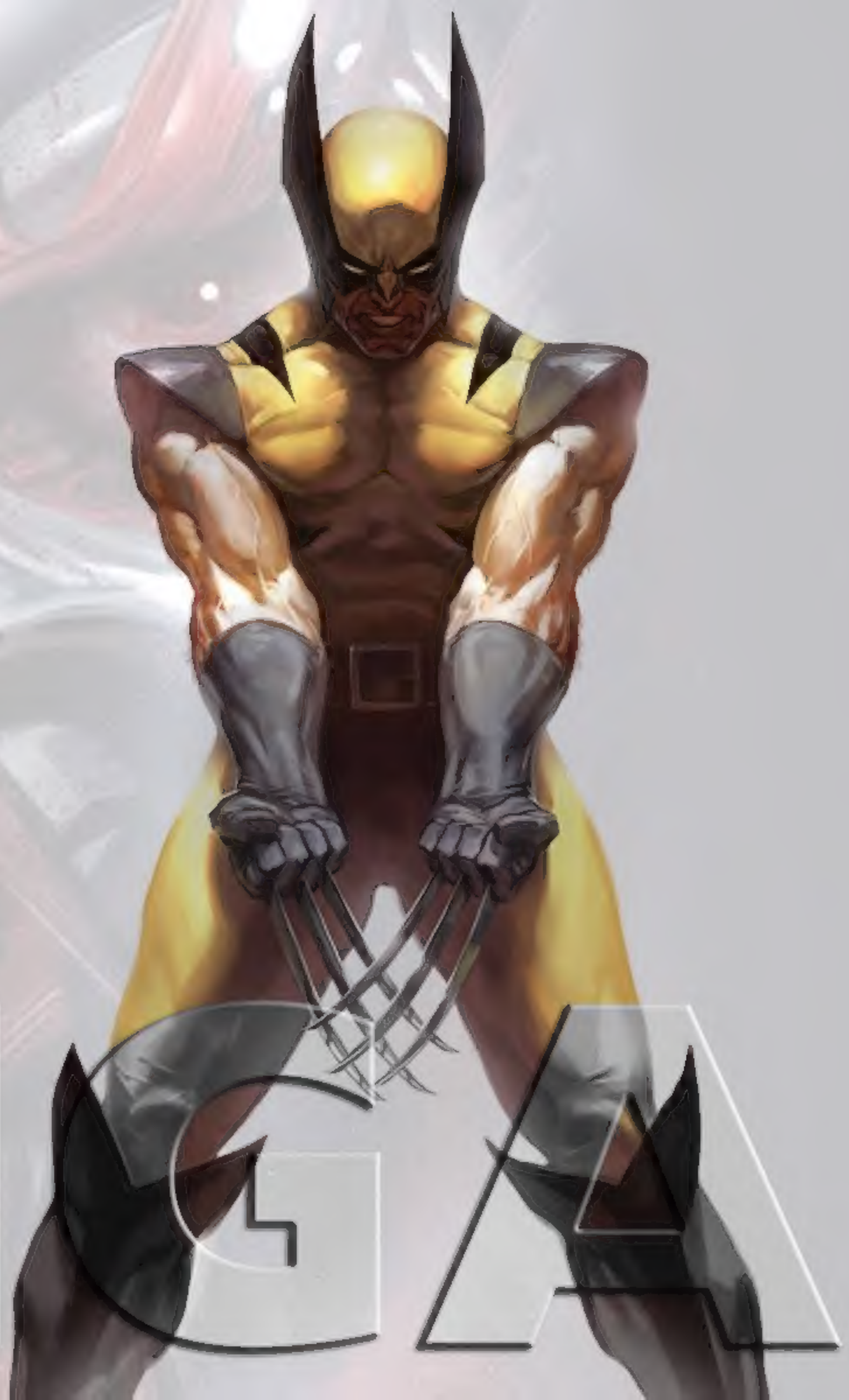


FABLES:
1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



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